

**February 2022**



## A Note From Better Beginnings Program Administrator Kelli Hilburn



Spring is around the corner! I'm very excited to see all the pretty colors that come with an Arkansas spring.

Spring brings great opportunities for children to explore and experience blooming flowers, the feel of soft grass under their feet and to learn about the different seasons.

We adults have seen the seasons change many times. However, while watching our children make new discoveries through outdoor play, we can rediscover the awe and wonder that is around us in every blade of grass or new green leaf on a tree winter made leafless.

You can find activities for **exploration** and **play** on the Better Beginnings website. Check it out and enjoy springtime with your child.

Included in this edition of the *Family Buzz* are science resources that also encourage exploration. Keep reading for those resources, available on the **new Better Beginnings website!**

**Kelli Hilburn**

BETTER BEGINNINGS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR  
DIVISION OF CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



## 3...2...1... BLAST OFF!

The new Better Beginnings website has launched!

Better Beginnings  
Means Better  
Opportunities

About Us > Parents & Families > Providers & Teachers > Trending > Español

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white shirt and jeans, smiling as she crouches on a wooden floor. A baby in a blue shirt and white pants is crawling towards her. To the right of the image, the text "Better Beginnings Means Better Opportunities" is overlaid. Below the image is a navigation bar with colored segments and text: "About Us" (dark red), ">" (white), "Parents & Families" (blue), ">" (white), "Providers & Teachers" (green), ">" (white), "Trending" (orange), ">" (white), and "Español" (purple).

Have you seen the newly redesigned Better Beginnings website? We're so excited it's here! Check it out and share it with other families so they can find activities to do with their children, information about child development and more!

[Watch this video for a tour of the redesigned website.](#)

# SCIENCE RESOURCES



Here are great resources for **science** fun this month! You can find more low cost resources on a variety of topics in our [Family Resource Library](#).

## Play, Explore, Learn Outdoors

Playing with your children outdoors is not only fun, it's beneficial for both children and parents. Check out these simple ways to interact with your children while outside and see how many additional ways you can think of to help your child learn from the great outdoors.

- Have a picnic! Eat lunch or dinner or a snack in your backyard or in the park.
- Collect leaves, acorns, pecans or pine cones. Compare them. How are they different? All look alike? What differences do you see?
- Fly a kite.
- Collect items in the sand or dirt.
- Draw in the sand or dirt.
- Collect rocks. Make up a game to play with pebbles and rocks.
- Sit outside and observe and watch ants. Be sure there are no fire ants! Sprinkle bread crumbs on the ground and watch what birds come to eat them.
- Watch the birds. How many different birds do you see in your yard?
- Hang a bird feeder or set out a bird bath. Keep a journal.
- Run barefoot through the grass.
- Closely observe a small area of grass about one square foot. Describe what you see outside and play!

Look for different colors and shapes.

- Lie on your back in the grass and watch the clouds. Observe the shapes of the clouds. What shapes do you see? What do these shapes remind you of?
- Only go outside when you can see the window and watch the rain. Take a walk during a gentle rain. Splash in puddles.

Click here to visit our Resource Library. You'll find activities and tips to help you prepare your child for life.

[ARBetterBeginnings.com • 1-501-682-8590](#)



EVERY CHILD DESERVES OUR BEST

## Sticks and Stones Creativity

There is a world of natural resources outdoors: playing with those elements - from the woods, park or your own backyard - helps children develop a love of nature and a caretaking attitude towards it. You can always take off to the woods to appreciate the natural beauty of the environment. Train her gently. She won't mind if you bring home a few sticks and stones.

Sort out the different elements and talk about what they are:

- What are their names?
- What are they made of?
- Where did they come from?
- Do they grow on trees?
- Do they grow in water?
- Do they grow in a creek or forest?
- Do they need water? Light? Soil? Darkness?

Parents may have to do a little research, but that's a bonus activity to share.

Go outside and play!

Your preschooler may make a nature scene from collected elements of nature. Imagination turns "trash" into treasure. Talk about his or her creation.

Help your child set up a pie plate jungle scene. Use sticks, stones, leaves, twigs, etc. from nature's own supply closet. Let your child decide the arrangement.

Note about water: Moss can go without water for a very long time. It needs water to live, but only a tiny bit of water for a moment and shake off excess water before before putting it back in its container. Lichen needs no water.

Don't forget to Get Muddy with Buddy! Here's how.

See our outdoor resource pages for more fun activities for discovering nature.



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## WOODLAND Mini Garden

It all begins with a discovery adventure.

Gathering nature's little treasures is an important part of this activity. Make a family adventure of exploring the outdoors and collecting natural items. These treasures will expand your child's imagination and appreciation of nature's treasures lying right on the ground.

Adult supervision is essential. Talk to your child about safety collecting treasures before your adventure begins.



### Making Your Woodland Mini Garden

1. Select a container that is deep enough to plant your favorite plants.
2. Cover the bottom of the container with about an inch of pebbles or gravel. This is for drainage. Most plants don't like to sit in water.
3. Cover the pebbles with soil. Fill container to about three-quarters full.
4. Make a hole in the soil and add your feature plant.
5. Fill the hole with soil and pat the soil down gently.
6. Place your treasures to fill the surface of the bowl. Involving your child in this part of the project is a great way to teach him/her about nature's own supply closet. Let your child decide the arrangement.
7. Pour about half a cup of water around the feature plant. Repeat watering once per week.

Note about watering: Moss can go without water for a very long time. It needs water to live, but only a tiny bit of water for a moment and shake off excess water before before putting it back in its container. Lichen needs no water.

Visit this science section of our Family Resource Library for more outdoor discovery activities.

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Parental Supervision Required.

Remember, everyone wash your hands after collecting treasures and after creating your gardens.

See the next page for photos and fun facts about moss and lichen.

**Playing with your children outdoors is not only fun. It's beneficial for both children and parents. Check out these simple ways to interact with your children while outside and see how many additional ways you can think of to help your child learn from the great outdoors.**

**There is a world of natural resources outdoors. Playing with those elements - from the woods, park or your own backyard - helps children develop a love of nature. When children appreciate the beauty of nature, they become caretakers of it.**

**Gathering nature's little treasures is an important part of this activity. Make a family adventure of exploring the forest, local park or your own yard. You may be surprised at nature's little treasures lying right on the ground.**

## Play, Explore, Learn Outdoors

## Sticks & Stones Creativity

## Woodland Mini-Garden

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



## 10 Minutes Matter



Parents, did you know that reading to young children just 10 minutes a day matters? Reading:

**HELPS THEIR BRAINS DEVELOP**

90 percent of a person's brain develops in the first 5 years of life

**LETS PARENTS AND CHILDREN BOND**

Snuggling together with a book gives you a chance to nurture your child

**PREPARES CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN**

Reading aloud can help young children learn sounds and language

**CHANGES LIVES**

Commit to making time to read to your children every day. Everyone has 10 minutes

To find free books and other resources, visit [ar.gov/10minutes](http://ar.gov/10minutes)



The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is encouraging parents to read to their young children at least 10 minutes each day through the 10 Minutes Matter campaign.

Reading to young children:

- Helps their brains develop.
- Lets parents and children bond.
- Prepares children for kindergarten.
- Changes lives.

Learn more about the 10 Minutes Matter campaign on the DHS **[website](#)**. There you'll also find a list of books categorized by age to get you started.

The Better Beginnings website has resources in the **[Family Resource Library](#)** you can use to help further your child's literary success outside the classroom. Check them out today!



**Partners for Inclusive Communities** offers a free service for families and their children with autism. The Arkansas Autism Partnership offers one-on-one intervention services with specialized strategies tailored to the child.

Find more information and eligibility requirements on their [website](#).



Children ages birth to five in all of Arkansas's 75 counties can now get books from the **Dolly Parton Imagination Library**!

Find out on their [website](#) how you can sign up to get one free, age appropriate book each month for the child in your life.

## PANDEMIC GUIDELINES

As COVID-19 circumstances may change daily, Arkansas DHS and the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will **monitor and adjust these guidelines as needed**.

Find **[COVID Advice and Resources](#)** in the footer of our website. [Click here](#) to download the PDF or screenshot the document and save to your phone for quick access!



 

Arkansas Department of Health  
Arkansas Department of Human Services

To: Child Care Facilities  
From: Dr. Jose Romero, Secretary of Health  
Cindy Gillespie, Secretary of Human Services  
Date: January 10, 2022  
Subject: Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Facilities\*

Early childhood education programs are an important part of the infrastructure of communities. They provide safe and supportive environments for children to support social and emotional development, provide access to critical services, and enable parents, guardians, and caregivers to work. Children can be infected with the SARS-CoV-2 Virus that causes COVID-19, can get sick with COVID-19, and can spread the virus to others. Most early childhood education programs serve children under 12 years of age, which makes them a key part of our public health system.

The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is providing interim guidance to the regulated childcare facilities throughout the state on implementing layered COVID-19 prevention strategies to protect those who are not fully vaccinated, including infants and toddlers, staff, and other household members in households. Guidelines will be revised when CDC releases recommendations for these early childhood education programs.

\* It is recommended facilities should prohibit persons from the facility with the exception of:

- Facility staff;
- Persons with legal authority, including law enforcement officers, childcare licensure agent, and DHS Child Protective Service's staff;
- Professionals providing services to children;
- Children enrolled at the facility;
- Parents and legal guardians who have children enrolled and present at the facility;

Do not allow visitors to the facility. Children and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness should stay home and be referred to their health care provider for testing and care. If a child or staff person becomes sick while at the facility, separate them from other children and staff at the facility. Contact the child's healthcare provider or legal guardian.

• All efforts should be made to limit the number of children in each classroom to the extent possible and keeping children in the same assigned group/class each day.

• Maximize physical distance as much as possible when eating.

• Reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and covering coughs and sneezes to keep from getting and spreading infectious illness including COVID-19.

ARKANSAS DHS PANDEMIC GUIDELINES FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

# WHAT IS BETTER BEGINNINGS?



**Better Beginnings means better opportunities.** Investing in quality child care for all Arkansas children creates better opportunities for our children, families, workforce and communities.

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)



Better Beginnings is Arkansas's tiered 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.



Better Beginnings | DCCECE, Attn: Better Beginnings, PO Box 1437, Slot S150,  
Little Rock, AR 72203-1437

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