

October 2021

A NOTE FROM  
BETTER BEGINNINGS  
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR  
KELLI HILBURN



Hello! I'm Kelli Hilburn, the new program administrator for Better Beginnings.

I am excited to be part of the quality child care team. Better Beginnings is vital to ensuring **all** children have access to quality care. I will work to ensure your child is healthy and safe in their program while keeping you informed of any changes.

November is all about **literacy** and we have a fun activity you can do with your child to bring literacy and thankfulness together: a gratitude chain!

Make strips out of the paper you have available (reusing junk mail envelopes is a great source of paper) and write down what your kids say they are thankful for. The funnier their answers, the better. Modeling writing for your child helps them develop their writing skills so make sure they see you write. You can find out more about how a child starts writing by viewing our **[Making Their Mark](#)** resource from the **[Family Resource Library](#)**.

Once you have their responses written down, help the kids put the strips of words together in a chain. This is a great activity for children to learn new words and explore the feeling of gratitude.

We are looking for the next Arkansas Outstanding Early Childhood Professional. Keep reading for information on how to nominate someone and for more **literacy** resources on making kids into readers.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Kelli Hilburn

**Kelli Hilburn**

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



Here are great resources to help you make readers out of your young children. You can find more resources on a variety of topics in our **Family Resource Library**.



Children take their first steps towards literacy long before they talk. Talk, sing and tell your child stories. Allow your child to play with books. All these experiences are the building blocks for reading and writing. Here are some simple ways you and your child can enjoy books together:

**With Infants:**

- **Hold them** touch books and turn the pages. As they begin to crawl in the pages. Talk about what you see.
- **Read books every day.** Read books to your child daily and make it a routine. Let them see you reading.
- **Read and play with books every day.** Make it a fun and playful time. Read books to your child every day.
- **Point to interesting pictures as you read.** Describe them. Explain what you see. Play peek-a-boo with the pictures to keep your child's attention.
- **What kinds of books are best?**
  - Picture books with colorful objects in focus.
  - Board or cloth books with pages that turn easily and last long.
  - Books with soft, rough or heavy textures to touch and feel.

**With Toddlers and Preschoolers:**

- **Ask your child to point to pictures or to name things on the pages.** Start with a simple question: "Where is the cat?"
- **Have him tell the story.** Let him tell his own version or have him repeat what you say. Ask him to tell the story.
- **Ask your child to name the pictures in your child's books.** Use the pictures to ask questions.
- **Ask about the story.** Ask questions about what happened before what is happening now and what might happen in the next. "What did the mouse do? What is he doing now? What will he do next?"
- **What kinds of books are best?**
  - Books on topics of interest to your child, the animals, dinosaurs or fantasy.
  - Story books or simple stories about everyday activities.
  - Stories with only one or two sentences per page and lots of pictures.

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

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**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 "Hush." Echo her "coo" and baby sounds. Make eye contact so she knows 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 pictures. 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.

**Books for 4 months.**  
Newborns can't see well, high-contrast books help vision develop.

**Books for 6 months.**  
Babies can grasp objects now. Give her cloth and soft vinyl books she can hold without hurting herself.

**Books for 8 months.**  
Baby may become more interested in the story than the pictures.

**Books for 10 months.**  
Newborns can't see well, high-contrast books help vision develop.

**Books for 12 months.**  
Babies can turn the pages of books. Provide colorful board books as your baby becomes more active.

**Babble Back!**  
By 12 months your baby will make sounds such as "ba-ba," "da-da" and "ma-ma." Echo the sounds back. This turns making the sounds. Add new sounds. Now you're talking!

Sounds are the basis of speech and language. Language is the foundation of literacy.

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**Bring Books to Life**

Open the doors to learning and adventure with a visit to your local library. Membership is usually free and children can select from hundreds of books.

**Family brings books to life when they:**  
• **TALK** about the book before, during and after reading  
• **READ** the story with funny voices or gestures  
• **PLAY** by acting out the story or making something together

**Stone Soup**  
by Marcia Brown

Make a shopping list together. Children enjoy making lists. Your child may want to make his own list.

Go to the store together. Let your child help select the vegetables and prepare the soup. As you work, talk about story, since the monster goes to the soup in the bowl!

Ask your child to point out the vegetables in the book. You can point to their names. Do you like these vegetables? How do you use them?

In this classic story, hungry travelers come to a village. They have nothing but an empty cooking pot. Find out how the clever travelers get the villagers to donate food to make "stone soup."

**The Runaway Bunny**  
by Margaret Wise Brown

A little bunny is loved with life at home. He decides to run away. Mother Bunny has a plan to bring him home.

**Tell the Story Together**  
Children often want to read the same book over and over. Ask your child questions as you read along. Or ask her to tell you the story using the pictures as a guide.

Or make up your own story using the book as a guide. For instance: "If you are a fish, then you'll become a fish in the pond."

**Act Out the Story**  
Pretend your child's stuffed animals are having the conversation in the book. No bunny? No problem. Use the story to ask silly questions of the stuffed animals or other toys in the room. Or make up something like: "You're not a bunny! What kind of animal are you? Are you a fish? Are you a bear? A flower? Are you a child?"

**What is learned from all of this reading and play?**  
Your child feels that he is important to you. You shared a book and had a conversation. You did something together!

Visit our Family Resource Library for more activities that help develop literacy.

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**Want to build a reader? Start when they're young! Playing with a book and flipping the pages gets kids on the right track. Learn more with this resource.**

**Make Reading Fun**

**Babies aren't too young for books! Here's a guide on building a strong foundation to "raise a reader".**

**Raising a Reader - Baby's First Year**

**Open the doors to learning and adventure with a visit to your local library! This resource shows you how to bring those "books to life" while you're reading them to your kids.**

**Bring Books to Life**

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



## Got Books?



Are you needing books for your little readers? Check out the **Dolly Parton Imagination Library**! It is a book-gifting program that provides free, high-quality books to eligible children from birth to five (5) years old.

Parents, legal guardians, and other **authorized adults** can register eligible children for the Library.

# FREE TRAINING



Curricula Concepts Inc. is offering the following trainings online via Zoom for **families**. Pre-registration is required. If the participant must cancel for any reason, please let Curricula Concepts know as soon as possible. Spots are limited and there may be a waiting list.

Click on the training title to register.

- **Responsive Caregiving**
  - November 2, 2021 - 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.
- **Healthy Media for Young Children**
  - November 9, 2021 - 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.
- **Parenting With Purpose: Self-Control**
  - November 10, 2021 - 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
- **How Children Learn Through Play**
  - November 11, 2021 - 12:30 - 1:15 p.m.
- **Self-Control**
  - November 30, 2021 - 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.
- **Family Cafe: The Importance of Self-Care**
  - December 9, 2021 - 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

# NOMINATIONS OPEN



## Arkansas Outstanding Early Childhood Professional

The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education is looking for the next Arkansas Outstanding Early Childhood Professional. This award honors the significant contributions a professional makes to the early childhood and education field.

To qualify, nominees must:

- Meet minimum licensing requirements for child care staff
- Be employed by a licensed provider in good standing
- Have taught an early childhood classroom for at least three years
- Plan to remain in early childhood for the 2022-2023 fiscal year
- Be willing and able to serve as an early childhood ambassador

The winning professional will serve on committees, represent early childhood educators in the media as needed and be featured on media and social media outlets.

The nomination packet can be found on the Better Beginnings website.

The deadline to nominate someone is January 21, 2022.

[Click here for the nomination packet.](#)

## PANDEMIC GUIDELINES



Just a quick reminder that you can always find the most updated **Pandemic Guidelines** from Arkansas DHS on our website.

Find the **Trending tab** and then click the **COVID Advice and Resources for Families** button.

Or, **click here** to download the PDF or screenshot the document and save to your phone for quick access!

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

**ARKANSAS DHS PANDEMIC GUIDELINES FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

# 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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