



Literacy



Math



Science



**better beginnings**

EVERY CHILD DESERVES OUR BEST



**A NOTE FROM  
KELLI HILBURN**

**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR**

Working with children every day brings opportunities for connection and fun through play-based learning. The children in your care and their families aren't the only ones impacted by what you do, though. You are too. You find joy with each new skill a child masters and love to see them hit each developmental milestone. Almost every interaction with a child is a chance to see a child's wonder and experience true joy. I know those moments are

highly satisfying and are why you do what you do.


Better Beginnings wants to help you see more joyful moments. Use the [math](#) resources we included in this edition of the *Buzz* or an activity you learned about at a prior professional development session. Whatever you do, make it fun for the children in your care and they'll learn quickly.

Check out the latest on Academic Approval, learn about the AR Resource Connections [website](#), and take note of the upcoming events as you read through this edition of the *Buzz*. Don't forget the latest round of star approvals and congratulate your colleagues on their hard work to provide high-quality care for children.

**A quick note from the Office of Early Childhood** We see and are appreciative of the countless hours you put into serving the children and families of Arkansas. Your commitment and partnership with us to increase access to early care and education is valuable. We're working to put good systems in place to support your amazing work. One of those systems is a new provider portal to replace the Child Care Billing website. All providers with an active Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Program Participant Agreement will use this new portal. More information and an implementation timeline will be available soon.

You're doing great work and we can't wait to see what's next as you continue [reaching for the stars](#).

Until next time,



**Kelli Hilburn**

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



JOIN US IN OUR GOAL THIS YEAR TO  
**REACH FOR THE STARS**  
CLICK TO LEARN MORE



**VIDEO  
CORNER**

**WATCH NOW** 

Hands-on learning is a great way to enhance a child's experience. Watch this video to see how to use play dough to create magical math moments in your classroom.



PLAY,  
LEARN,  
EXPLORE

# LEARNING RESOURCES



**MAKE IT MATH**

Help your toddler learn math with these fun hands-on activities.

Use your child's natural curiosity about counting, shapes, colors and patterns to help them learn math. These activities are designed to be fun and engaging for your child.

These activities help your child recognize and name numbers, shapes, colors and patterns.

Visit our Family Resource Library for more hands-on learning activities.

Click here to visit our Resource Library for fun activities and tips to help you prepare your child for life.

ARBetterBeginnings.com • 1-501-682-8590

**Play the Way to Math Skills**

Many of the math skills your child needs to kindergarten develop naturally through play and learning. Children learn best through repetition, play, repetition and fun. These activities are designed to help your child practice counting, number and counting.

**Math Skills**

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**Talk Math**

Introduce your child to math through every day conversation. There are some steps to talk math with your child and play. Children learn best through repetition, play, repetition and fun. These activities are designed to help your child practice counting, number and counting.

**Math Skills**

Use your child's natural curiosity about counting, shapes, colors and patterns to help them learn math. These activities are designed to be fun and engaging for your child.

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## Make it Math

Play dough is a great tool to help children identify numbers and colors while working on their fine motor skills. Use this resource to help guide them through this activity.

[View Resource](#)

## Play the Way to Math Skills

Children learn best through play. This resource is full of fun activities to help children retain key fundamental math concepts to aid them in their future educational endeavors.

[View Resource](#)

## Talk Math

Introduce your students to math through everyday conversation! Children learn by repetition so sing, talk, play, and repeat while you work and play. Check out the activities in this resource for more.

[View Resource](#)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

LEARNING IS FUN!



## Academic Approval

The **LEARNS Act** requires licensed early learning providers receiving public funds to participate in

**academic approval** starting the 2024-2025 academic year. Licensed early childhood sites that don't accept public funding may opt-in and receive a rating through Better Beginnings. Your licensing specialist will give you resources to certify your participation in academic approval.

Early learning sites participating in academic approval must:

- Participate with their [local lead](#) organization and all associated activities
- Participate in Better Beginnings



[Learn More](#)



## [AR Resource Connections](#)

AR Resource Connections is a one-stop location for early childhood designed to save providers time, reduce costs, and improve quality! Over 2,500 innovative and practical tools, handbooks, policies, and resources are available on a variety of topics to help providers increase quality. Visit the website today!

[Learn More](#)



### **Provider Call**

*Zoom, September 3*

Zoom with Office of Early Childhood officials to learn the latest from the field of early childhood education in Arkansas. Join the call live or watch the recording later.

[Get the Link](#)

## 5th Annual Early Childhood STEAM Conference

Hot Springs, September 28

Ready to learn how to bring more science, technology, engineering, art, and math into your classroom? Join our friends from Child Care Aware of West Central Arkansas at their annual STEAM conference! You'll hear ideas from early childhood education experts to take back to your classroom. Contact Donny Caudill at [donald.caudill@np.edu](mailto:donald.caudill@np.edu) to register.

[Learn More](#)

### AECA Conference

Little Rock, October 9-12

Join us at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual AECA Conference to understand how connections with children are powerful and can have a positive impact on those we serve. Register today to hear from keynote speakers DJ Pryor, Hilary Trudell, and Arkansas early care and education leaders.

[Register](#)

### ADDITIONAL Town Hall Meetings

Arkansas, October & November

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is going back on the road! Join OEC officials at Early Childhood Town Halls throughout the state in October and November to learn about key accomplishments one year into the LEARNS Act. Attendees will also be invited to provide input into the work for the upcoming year. Each Town Hall will take place from **10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**, and there will be virtual options for those who can't join in person.

Details are below:

#### Town Halls

Date	Location	Venue	POC
10/02/24	NE - Jonesboro Area	Hames Meeting Room First National Bank Arena 217 Olympic Drive Jonesboro, AR 72401	Chrissy Sain
10/16/24	DeQueen Area	305 Hornberg Ave, Gillham, AR 71841	Karen Garner
10/23/24	Harrison Area	John Paul Hammerschmidt Conference Center	Anne Cowie

		North Arkansas College South Campus 1515 Pioneer Dr. Harrison, AR 72601	
10/30/24	Pine Bluff	Big Rock Auditorium AR ESC 912 W 6th Ave Pine Bluff, AR 71601	Cathi Swan
11/06/24	Conway	Special Education Annex 1902 Hairston St. Conway, AR 72034	Keisha Jefferson

BETTER BEGINNINGS  
**STAR APPROVALS**

QUALITY CARE!

Congratulations to these providers on reaching that next star level! Ready to join this list? Check out the [Provider Tools](#) on our website for assistance.



The following program is now a **6-star** Better Beginnings provider:

- Jean Tyson Child Development Study Center, Fayetteville



The following program is now a **5-star** Better Beginnings provider:

- The Pre-K at Leverett, Fayetteville



The following programs are now **4-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- ABC Children's Academy of Dardanelle, Dardanelle
- Bill & Carolyn Craft Head Start, Harrisburg
- Community Services Office Inc. Head Start Center South West Plaza, Hot Springs
- Cook Elementary Preschool, Fort Smith
- CSO Head Start Center - Blake Street, Pine Bluff
- CSO Head Start Center - David Vaughn, Pine Bluff
- Fairview Head Start/ Early Head Start Center, El Dorado
- Hector ARVAC Head Start, Hector
- King Elementary Preschool, Van Buren
- Little Bitty City Enrichment Center De Queen, De Queen



The following programs are now **3-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- CSO Early Head Start Center - Leon R. Massey, Hot Springs
- Nika's Playroom, Vilonia
- Keiser Head Start Center, Keiser
- Day Camp Learning Center, Lonoke
- Wee Care Child Development, Dumas
- Sylvan Hills Learning Center, Sherwood
- AEL Geraldine Anderson Center, Jonesboro



## TWO STAR PROVIDERS

The following programs are now **2-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- ArCare Center for Education, Searcy
- The Climbing Ladder Daycare, Alma
- Abundant Love Childcare Center LLC, Jonesboro

## ONE STAR PROVIDERS

The following programs are now **1-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- St. Catherine of Siena Child Care, Barling
- We Are The Future Daycare, Camden

### Level Up Resource

Looking to increase your star level? Check out our [Provider Tools](#) to get started!

Visit our Website

# 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



**FOLLOW US  
FOR MORE  
RESOURCES**



Better Beginnings is Arkansas' tiered quality rating and 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 Education of Office of Early Childhood.



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

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